

CLAIMS

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5 1. In a video decoder system for receiving program guide information from a first source, a method for forming a composite program guide for program content available from a plurality of sources, comprising the steps of:

a) retrieving access data from memory;

10 b) initiating communication automatically between said decoder and a second source external to said video decoder using said access data, said communication being initiated by said decoder independently of a user command associated with program or service selection;

15 c) retrieving program guide information from said second source; and

d) incorporating said program guide information provided by said first and second sources into a program guide for display.

20 2. A method according to claim 1 wherein, in step (b) said communication is initiated on a repetitive basis in response to preprogrammed instructions of a processor.

25 3. A method according to claim 1 wherein, in step (b) said communication is initiated irrespectively of any command entered by a user via a data entry device.

30 4. A method according to claim 1 wherein, in step (b) said communication is initiated in response to at least one of: a) power-up of said decoder, and b) power-up of an attached peripheral device.

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5. A method according to claim 1 further including the step of

detecting a change in number or type of peripheral
5 devices connected to said decoder.

6. A method according to claim 5 wherein in step (b)
said communication is initiated in response to said change.

7. A method according to claim 5 wherein
10 said step of initiating communication is performed on a
repetitive basis in response to preprogrammed processor instruction
for said detecting of said change.

8. A method according to claim 5 wherein
15 said change is detected in response to configuration data
identifying a peripheral device attached to said decoder and provided
from one of: a) User data entry, and b) said received program guide
information.

9. A method according to claim 1 wherein
20 said step of initiating communication is performed in
response to pre-stored configuration data identifying a peripheral
device attached to said decoder.

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10. A method according to claim 1 wherein
said first source is one of a) a satellite broadcast source, b)
a terrestrial broadcast source, and c) a cable broadcast source, and
5 said second source is one of a) a storage source, b) an
Internet source, c) a computer network source, and d) a source
accessible via telephone lines.

11. In a video decoder system for receiving program
10 guide information from a first source, a method for forming a
program guide for program content available from a plurality of
sources, comprising the steps of:
a) retrieving access data from memory;
b) automatically identifying a peripheral device attached
15 to said decoder, said identification being initiated by said decoder
independently of a user command associated with program or service
selection;
c) initiating communication between said decoder and
said peripheral device attached to said decoder using a
20 communication protocol determined from said access data;
d) retrieving program guide information from said
peripheral device; and
e) incorporating said program guide information provided
by said first source and peripheral device into a program guide for
25 display.

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12. A method according to claim 11 wherein, in step (b)
said peripheral device is identified from configuration
information derived from one of: a) pre-stored data in internal
5 memory of said decoder, b) data entered by a User, and c) said
program guide information received from said first source.

13. A method according to claim 11 further including the
step of

10 polling via a decoder communication link to determine
whether said peripheral device is attached to said decoder link.

14. A method according to claim 11 further including the
step of

15 identifying a change in number or type of peripheral
devices connected to said decoder.

15. A method according to claim 14 wherein in step (c)
said communication is initiated in response to said change.

20 16. A method according to claim 11 wherein
said peripheral device is one of a) a storage device, b) a
device accessed via the Internet, c) a satellite, terrestrial or cable
broadcasting device, d) a device accessible via a computer network
25 and e) a device accessible via telephone lines.

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17. In a video decoder system for receiving program guide information from a first source, a method for forming a program guide for program content available from a plurality of sources, comprising the steps of:

a) retrieving access data from memory;

b) automatically initiating communication between said decoder and a peripheral device attached to said decoder in response to at least one of the following conditions: i) power-up of said decoder, ii) power-up of said attached peripheral device, iii) repetitive pre-programmed command from a decoder processor, iv) change in number of attached peripheral devices; and v) change in type of attached peripheral devices;

c) retrieving program guide information from said peripheral device; and

d) incorporating said program guide information provided by said first source and peripheral device into a program guide for display.

18. A method according to claim 17 wherein, in step (b) said communication is initiated using a communication protocol determined from said access data.

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